The Ancestral Trail

Cyber Challenge in the Next Dimension

46 Hydron, Mercury Monster

Return to the perilous sea of mercury

Julek Heller

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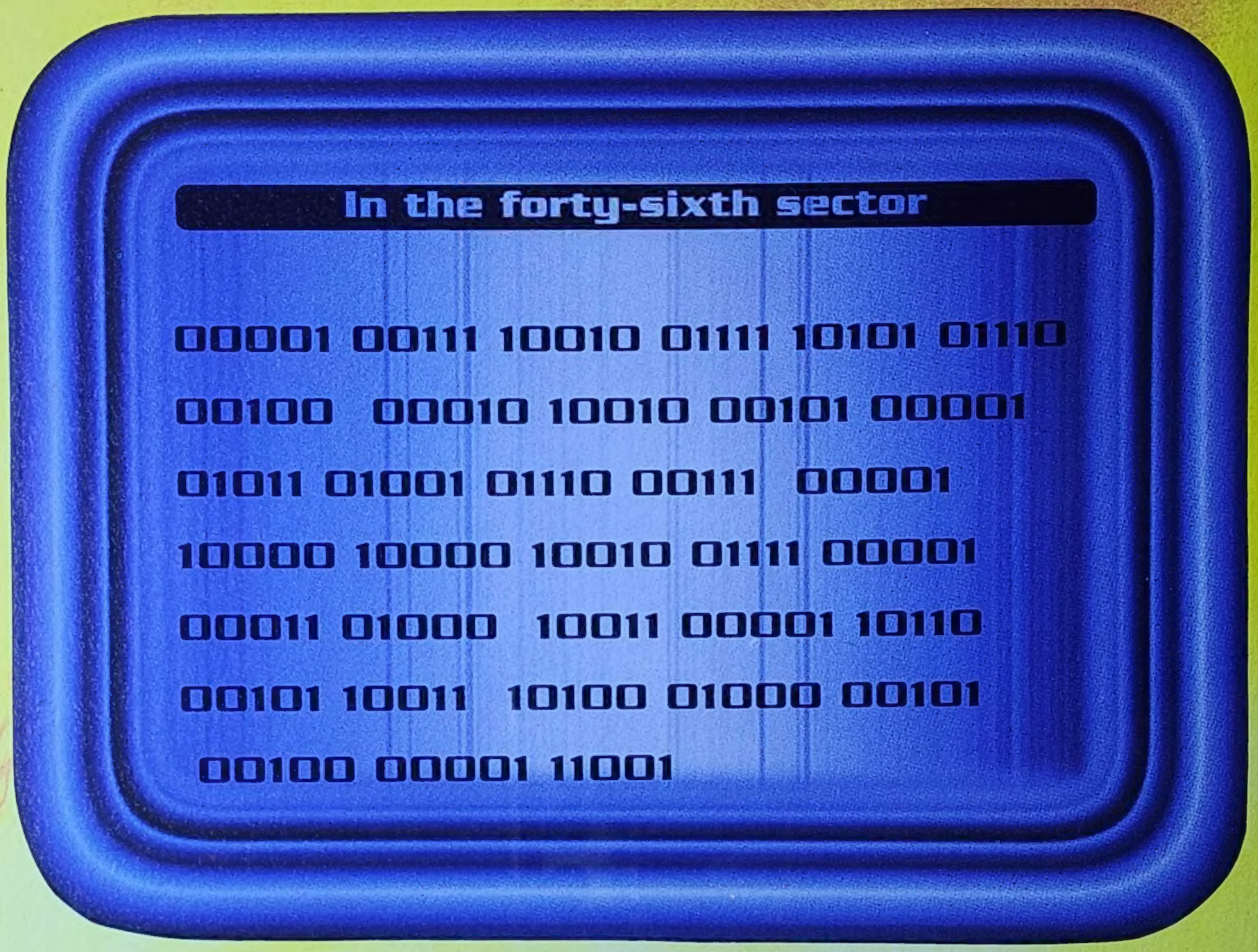


Computer graphics produced by Mehau Kulyk

Losing his patience rapidly, Richard pushed against the invisible barrier that blocked the gateway to Cortixia. "It's no good," he said angrily. "We'll never get out of this place!"

"...Never get out," Teeza echoed sadly.

Richard took a few steps away from the unseen obstacle and thought for a moment. "Got any ideas?" he asked his tiny companion.

Teeza's big eyes grew misty. The wigmat began to sob mournfully.

"Don't cry," his partner comforted. "We'll think of something."

Ominous sound

Just then, Richard heard a gentle shuffling sound coming from close by. "Hold on," he said, "what was that?"

"Ghost," Teeza whispered, his fur standing on end. "Badvibe!"

"That was no ghost," Richard replied, listening intently to the strange noise. "It sounded mechanical to me."

Without warning, there was a tremendous roar that almost burst the two friends' eardrums. This was followed by a blinding flash of white light.

As the ground began to shake, it was obvious that something nearby had violently exploded.

The force of the blast threw Richard and Teeza into the air like rag dolls. Picking himself up, Richard looked around to see a large plume of smoke rising into the air. All at once, there was a second explosion, which sent shock waves through the city.

Richard coughed as smoke filled his lungs. He looked over to where the gateway had once stood. It was no longer there. All that remained of the entrance to Cortixia was a pile of charred rubble.

For an instant, Richard felt a sense of elation. His way out of the city was no longer blocked. This feeling soon disappeared, however, when he noticed that something was moving in the smoke. It did not look at all friendly.

With Teeza cowering behind him, Richard drew his sword. "Stop right there!" he bravely called. "Tell me who you are and what you want or you'll have my blade to answer to!"

For several tense moments there was no response. The only sound that Richard could hear was Teeza's heartbeat, which was racing wildly. Then the shuffling sound began again. Richard gripped his sword tightly and repeated his warning.

Slowly, a figure emerged from the blanket of smoke. Slightly smaller in height than Richard, it had two hydraulic arms, which waved about as it hovered above the ground. At the end of one of the arms was a menacing looking gun. Richard had no doubts that this creature was responsible for destroying the gateway.

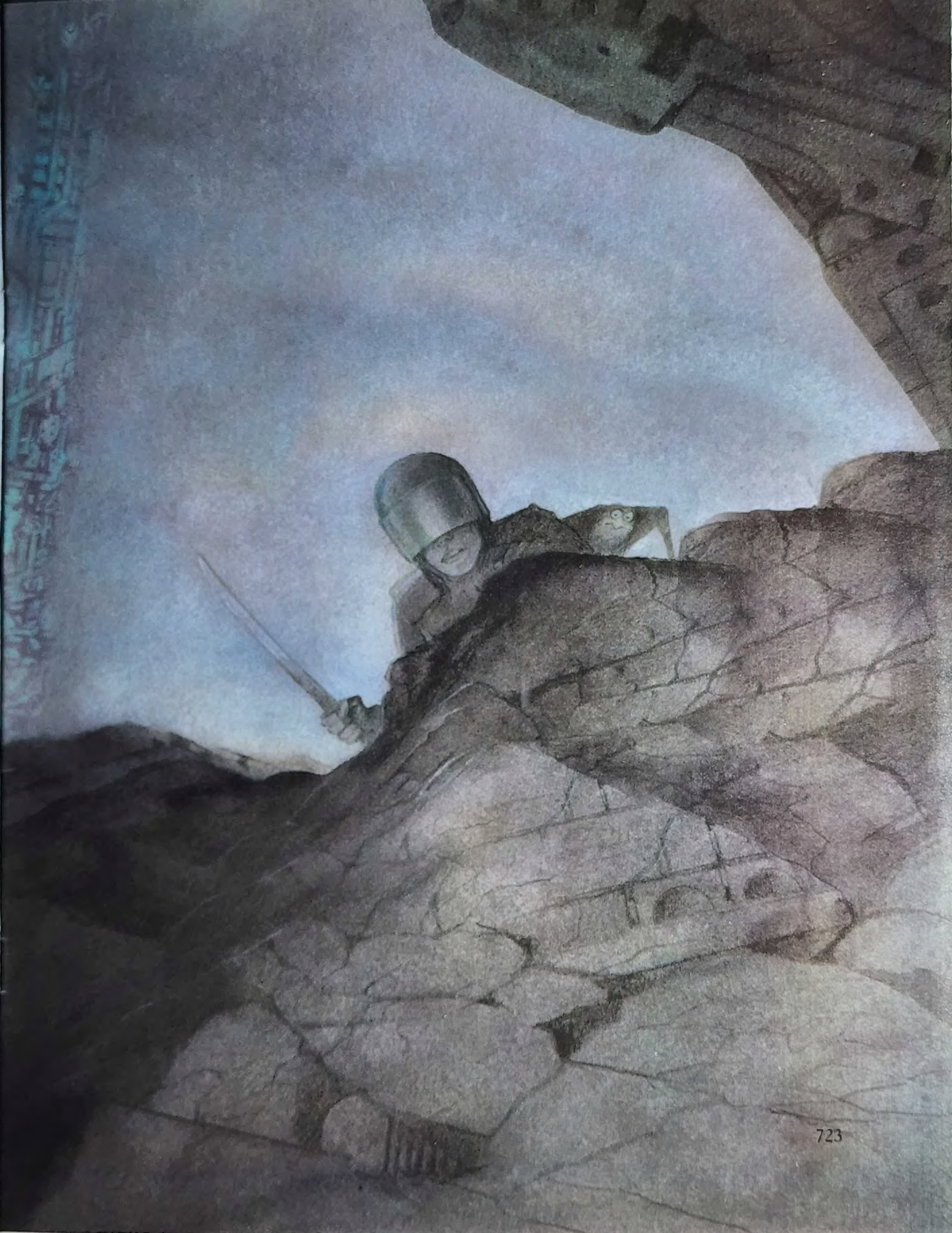
Familiar face

The arrival of the newcomer had an alarming effect on the wigmat. The little creature began to hop up and down frantically. Richard had never seen him look so terrified. "Badvibe! Badvibe!" the wigmat cried. "Run! Flee! Run!"

However, Richard was too entranced by the stranger to take heed of Teeza's warning. Feeling confused, he checked to see if his eyes were deceiving him.

Finally he spoke: "It's alright, Teeza, you can stop worrying." Richard said softly. "I know who this is."

With a smile on his face, Richard returned his sword to the holder around his waist and took several paces forward. "Robo – you're alive!" he said.



"Incorrect," said a familiar voice. "Robo not composed of organic material. Robo not alive."

"You haven't changed a bit," Richard laughed. "Except that you seem to have grown a new arm."

"Previous metallic limb was destroyed in forest fire," Robo explained. "Regeneration procedures created replacement."

"Do you mean that you repaired yourself?" asked Richard.

"Affirmative," came the response.

JOYFUL REUNION

"How did you find me?" Richard asked.

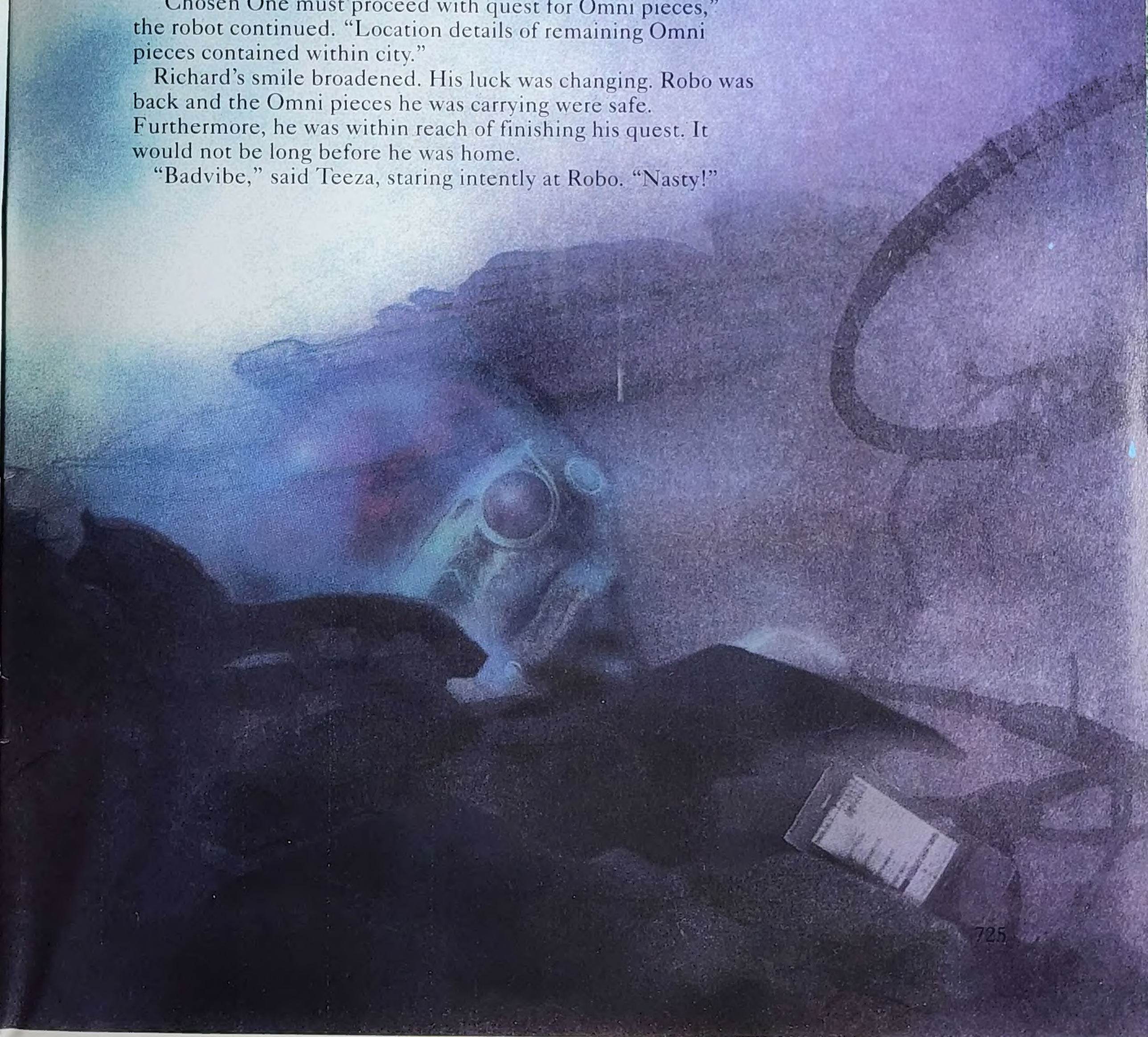
"Robo's sensors have been tracking Chosen One and his vermin companion since they left wigmat homestead."

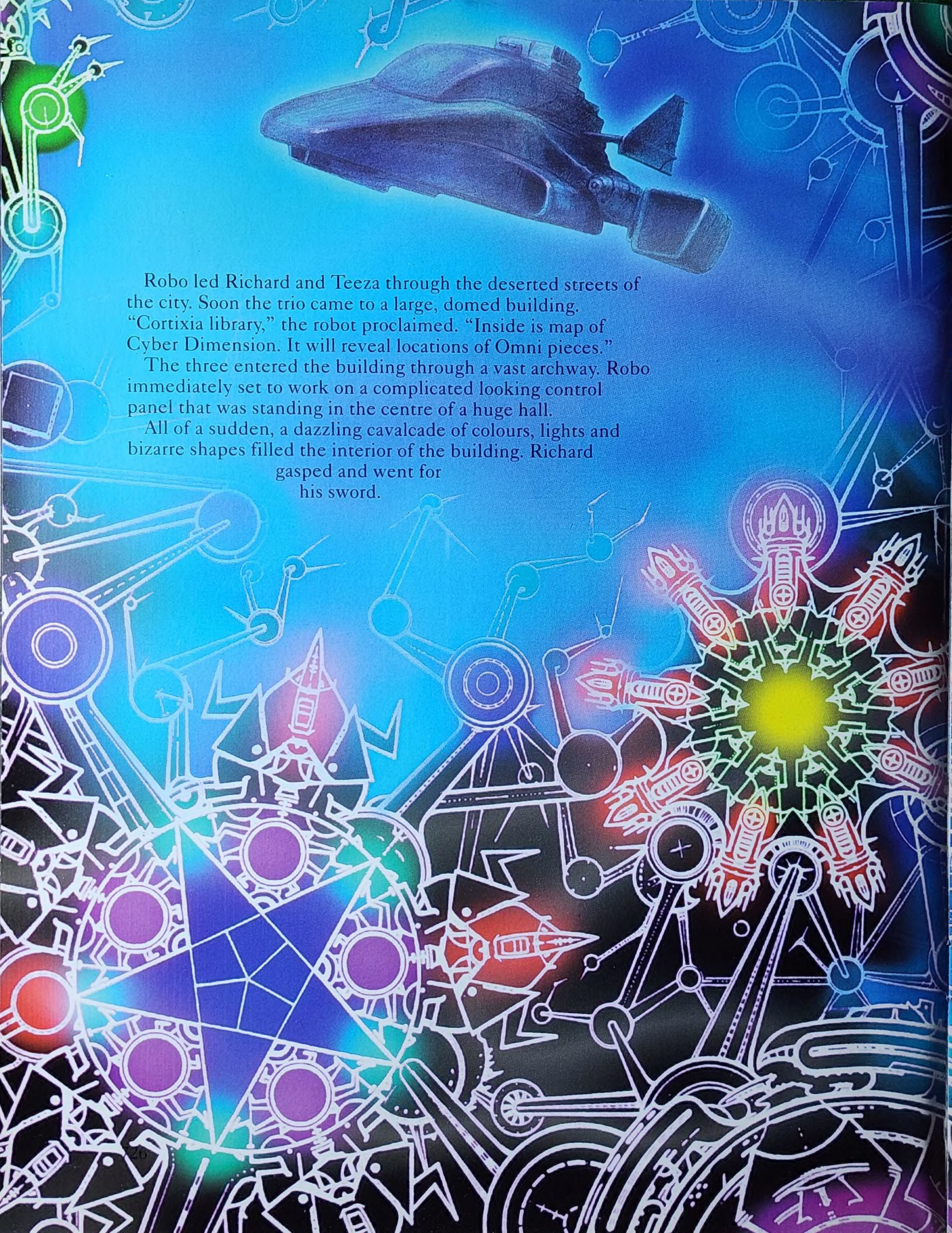
"Vermin! Huh!" said the outraged voice of Teeza.

"Chosen One must proceed with quest for Omni pieces," the robot continued. "Location details of remaining Omni pieces contained within city."

Richard's smile broadened. His luck was changing. Robo was back and the Omni pieces he was carrying were safe. Furthermore, he was within reach of finishing his quest. It would not be long before he was home.

"Badvibe," said Teeza, staring intently at Robo. "Nasty!"





Robo led Richard and Teeza through the deserted streets of the city. Soon the trio came to a large, domed building. "Cortixia library," the robot proclaimed. "Inside is map of Cyber Dimension. It will reveal locations of Omni pieces."

The three entered the building through a vast archway. Robo immediately set to work on a complicated looking control panel that was standing in the centre of a huge hall.

All of a sudden, a dazzling cavalcade of colours, lights and bizarre shapes filled the interior of the building. Richard gasped and went for his sword.

"No cause for concern," Robo announced. "Visual manifestation is Cyber Dimension map."

Richard looked on in awe as he took in Robo's words. The dancing colours that were all around him made up the strangest map he had ever seen.

THE QUEST CONTINUES

Robo's shrill voice began to explain what Richard was seeing. "Star shape and circle shape are remaining Omni pieces," he said. "Spiral shapes are worm holes. It is necessary to travel through these to find Omni pieces."

"We'll need the cyber cruiser to do that," said Richard.

As he spoke, a strange, high-pitched noise could be heard emanating from Robo's internal speakers. Richard gave a gasp of excitement as the cyber cruiser soared into the library. "Don't tell me," he grinned. "Remote control."

"Affirmative," announced Robo.

"Right," Richard said. "Let's go and find the Omni pieces."

Richard, Robo and Teeza climbed into the flying machine. It was a tight squeeze. Robo and the wigmat were forced to share the perch at the back of the craft.

"Suggest Chosen One leave wigmat vermin in Cortixia," Robo coldly advised.

"I'm coming with you!" Teeza hissed.

"What's the matter with you two?" Richard asked. "We're all on the same side you know!"

With Robo giving directions, the cruiser sliced through the air on a heading for the first worm hole. "Do we *have* to travel through the worm holes?" Richard asked. He could not forget his last journey through one of the strange tunnels. It had left him feeling sick and queasy.

It was not long before they reached their destination. The vast hole in time swirled around before them. With a deep feeling of trepidation, Richard guided the cyber cruiser towards it.

The craft entered soundlessly and Richard immediately felt the hairs on the back of his neck prickle. For several moments he could see or hear nothing.

FAMILIAR SIGHT

Then, suddenly, the voyage through the worm hole was over. Richard looked around and saw a landscape that he was very familiar with. He was flying over the mercury sea – the domain of the dreadful hermisites.

Following Robo's instructions, Richard steered the cyber cruiser to the surface of the sea of mercury.

With a tremendous splash the flying machine hit the silvery expanse of liquid metal. Rivulets of shiny mercury dripped over the exterior of the cyber cruiser.

"What now?" Richard asked.

"Sensors indicate that Omni piece is located on bed of mercury sea," Robo said. "Prepare to submerge."

Richard scanned the craft's control panel, looking for the button or dial which would allow him to perform this function. "Let's see," he murmured to himself, "could it be this one..."

ROBOTIC WARNING

"Warning! Do not touch!" the voice of Robo rang out. "Chosen One is about to initiate cyber cruiser self-destruct routine."

A look of worry was etched on Richard's face. "I didn't know the cruiser could do that," he said.

"Uh-oh," Teeza cut in.

"Submerge control is here," Robo advised, pointing a stubby claw at a small red button set beneath the joystick.

"Here goes..." Richard said.

As he pressed the button a bubbling noise could be heard. Instantly, there was darkness. The cyber cruiser was now heading for the bottom of the mercury sea.

Richard turned the cyber cruiser's lights on and got a surprise. Something else was moving in the metallic liquid.

Robo's sensors hummed into action. "Danger!" he pronounced. "Cyber cruiser surrounded by hermisites."

Richard strained his eyes to try and spot the oncoming attackers but it was useless. It was almost impossible to see anything through the dense mercury.

Without warning, the cyber cruiser began to rock from side to side. At the front window, a metallic tentacle could be seen. One of the hermisites had wrapped itself around the craft and was shaking it.

On the sea bed

The hermisite was very powerful and, for a while, Richard was worried that it would crush the cruiser. However, despite the awful groaning noise that was coming from the craft's hull, it seemed to be holding.

The hermisite dragged the cruiser into the depths of the sea. Richard tried to free the craft by increasing its engine power but the creature's grip was too strong. "What can we do, Robo?" he cried.

Before the robot had chance to answer Richard's desperate call, something quite unexpected happened: the sea of mercury disappeared!

The rippling waters vanished and were replaced by a terrain that reminded Richard of soggy marshland. "I don't understand!" he said in bemusement.

"Understand..." piped in Teeza.

"Cyber cruiser has been pulled into artificial air bubble," Robo explained.

"What do you mean?" Richard asked.

"We are still beneath mercury sea. Omni piece is nearby."

Richard was now able to get a clear look at the monster that was clinging to the cyber cruiser. It was almost identical to the frightening apparition that had poked its head out of the mercury sea the last time he was here.

"I was hoping I'd seen the last of the hermisites," Richard said glumly.

As he watched, more of the creatures moved into view. They approached the cruiser and prepared to attack.

Suddenly, a monstrous voice could be heard. "Leave them, my children," it said in deep, booming tones. "They are for me and me alone!"

"Who was that?" Richard gasped.

The hermisite that was holding the cruiser did as it was told. Without a sound, it let go of the cruiser and scuttled off into the distance. As it retreated, Robo answered Richard's question. "Creature is Hydron, king of the hermisites..."

"Dangerous," Teeza said.

"...Creature is dangerous," Robo continued, ignoring the wigmat's remark.

Peering out of the window, Richard took a long look at Hydron. Shaped like an enormous octopus, the monster was perched on a large glass dome. Inside the dome, Richard noticed something that was glowing. He knew what it was.

Ray of hope

"Robo!" Richard exclaimed. "I can see the Omni piece – but how on earth do we reach it?"

Then he had an idea. He wondered why he had not thought of it before. Swivelling his head to face his companions sitting behind him, Richard studied Robo's binary panel. As he expected, there was a message waiting to be read.

While Richard hastily began to decode the binary message, Hydron attacked. With a sweep of one of its huge tentacles, it struck the cyber cruiser, putting a dent in the side of the flying machine.

"Warning!" Robo announced. "Cyber cruiser will not withstand repeated Hydron attacks.

"You have made a big mistake," said the voice of Hydron. "You were lucky to escape from my children the last time you were here. Now you are mine!"

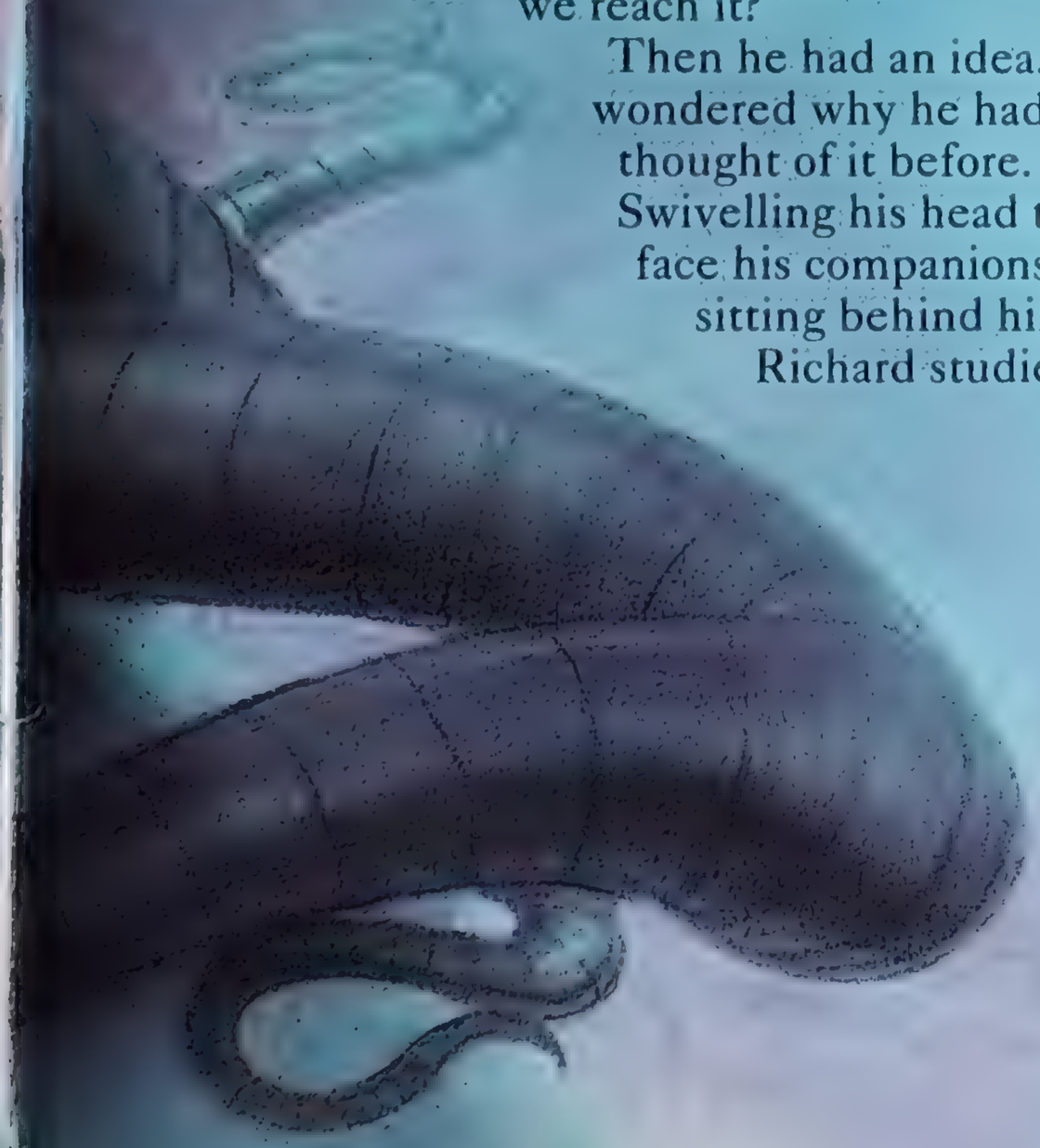
With a cry of triumph, the hermisite leader slithered off its perch on the glass dome and moved towards the three companions.

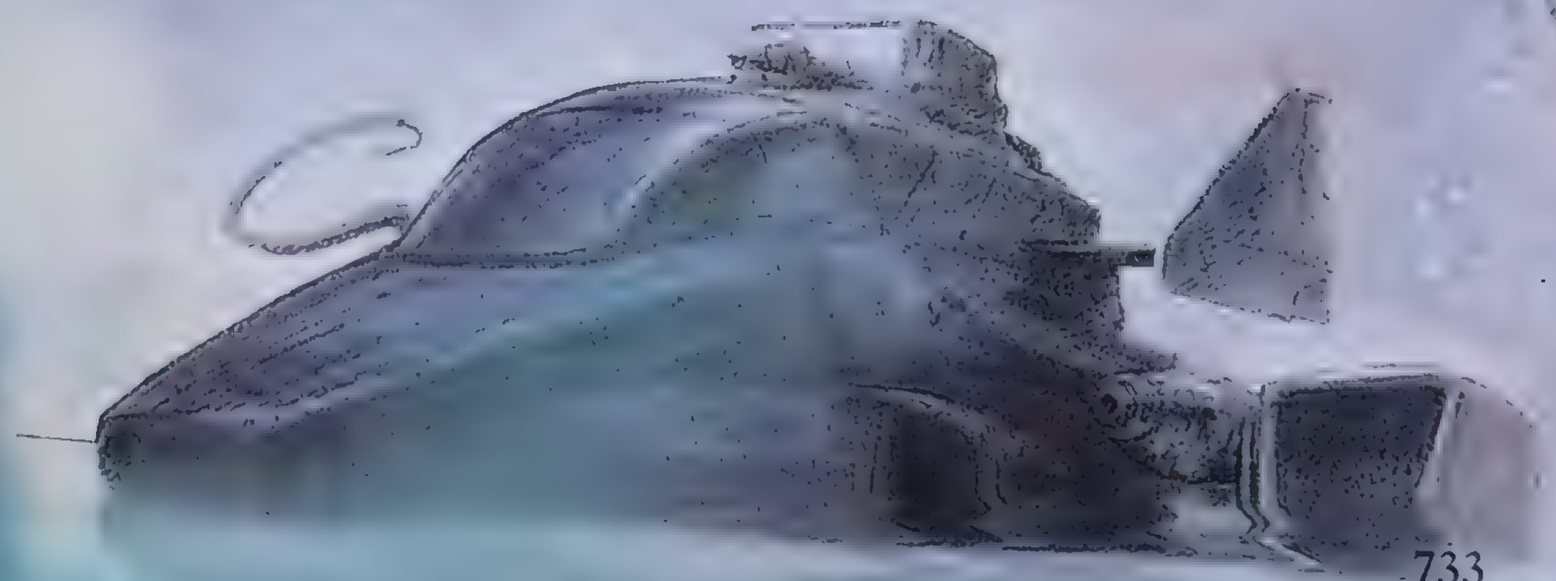
"Finished!" it was Richard's turn to be triumphant. "I think I know how we can get rid of that thing!"

Switching on the cruiser's neutron lasers, Richard took careful aim and fired at the ground directly underneath the great metallic beast.

"You missed," Teeza said glumly.

"Oh no I didn't!" Richard replied.





All at once, the ground beneath Hydron started to churn. Then it began to split asunder. The massive creature let out a roar of anger when it saw what was happening. "Nooooooooo!"

Crack in the world

"It was nice meeting you," Richard said cheekily. "I'm sorry it had to be so brief."

The trio watched as the cracks multiplied and widened. Soon there was a gaping chasm in the sea floor. Hydron struggled, but was helpless. Caught in the grip of some hidden force, first one tentacle, then another, was dragged into the hole that Richard had created.

"Hurray!" Teeza shouted.

"Silence, vermin," Robo said.

As Hydron disappeared forever, the screams of the terrified monster drowned out the sound of their voices.

"Now let's get that Omni piece!" Richard called, firing another burst of laser at the glass dome. It smashed into a million pieces and Richard steered the cruiser towards the Omni piece.

Surrounded by shards of broken glass, it lay on the ocean floor. "How do we reach the Omni piece?" Richard asked.

The robot did not reply. Instead, he turned his attention back to the cyber cruiser's control panel and once more began to operate the array of buttons and dials. Soon, a panel at Richard's feet that he had never before noticed swung open. Inside was the Omni piece.

"Hydraulic retrieval successful." Robo announced. "Danger! Chosen One must not touch."

"Yes, I know," Richard nodded.

"Teeza will carry! Teeza will carry!" said the wigmat.

"Robo will carry," disagreed the robot.

"Teeza! Teeza!" Richard's little friend loudly insisted.

"Will you two stop arguing!" Richard snapped. "Robo will carry it – it's safer!"

A disappointed look settled on Teeza's furry face.

"No sulking!" Richard demanded.

Danger from the deep

Robo picked up the Omni piece and placed it in his side panel. Just at that moment, there was a harsh grinding noise. At first, Richard thought that the hermisites had returned to continue their attacks. Then in dismay he realized what was happening.

The cruiser was caught by the same forces that had carried Hydron away to his doom. It was being dragged into the enormous crack that Richard's neutron lasers had created.

"Robo! Do something!" Richard cried as the cyber cruiser spiralled downwards.

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

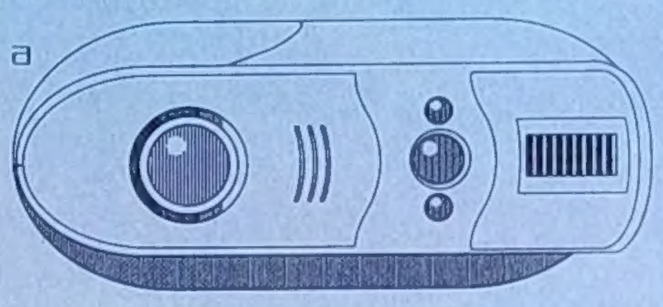
▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

Shoomi and Shoobi are still hot on the heels of our hero. Can you spot Richard's twin shadows somewhere in this issue in under three minutes?

In issue 45 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 710.

▶ Computer Challenge

Hidden somewhere in this issue is a vitally important computer component from the sinister Cyber Dimension. Use your visual skills to help Richard, Robo and Teeza locate it in less than three minutes.
When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?



In the last issue, a digital camera was hidden on page 720. Digital cameras are similar to ordinary cameras except that, instead of celluloid film, they use computer floppy disks to record visual images. Digital cameras store the visual information directly on to the floppy disk. This can then be copied on to a computer hard disk and edited using an appropriate paint program. The advantage of this system is that the floppy disk can be reused time and time again.

▶ Games Booklet

In this issue you will find the final pages of your special *Ancestral Trail* games booklet. Carefully cut out the pages and fold them down the centre. Inside the booklet, you will find the rules to all of the games that have been presented with *The Ancestral Trail: Cyber Challenge in the Next Dimension*.

▶ In issue 41 the locations of Shoomi and Shoobi and the microprocessor that were hidden in the previous issue were printed incorrectly. All can be found on page 632 in issue 40.

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The Ancestral Trail
Cyber Challenge in the Next Dimension
47 Mandlebiot, Fearsome Fractal
Fatal fury of the deadly digital demon

In Issue 47

Mandelbiot, Fearsome Fractal

A terrible fractal disease threatens to turn Richard and his two companions into slaves. Can Richard outwit the dreadful Mandlebiot and find the antidote before it is too late?

plus

- ▶ 2 more **Techscan** cards
- ▶ 4 more **Cyber Power** cards to add to your collection

Coming in Issue 48

Pixar, Particle Blaster

In a city where all is not what it seems, Teeza meets a grisly end. Will Richard and Robo avoid the same fate?

plus

Another **Techscan** card ▶ 4 more **Cyber Power** cards ▶ More **Cyber Chess** playing pieces.

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